

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 07111 01 OF 03 231458Z

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3201

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AMEMBASSY MA ILA

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C O N S I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 BANGKOK 7111

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, TH

SUBJ: COUNTERINSURGENCY POLICY OF THE KHUKRIT ADMINISTRATION

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAE

REF : BANGKOK A-72

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PAGE 02 BANGKO 07111 01 OF 03 231458Z

SUMMARY:

1. ALTHOUGH THE KHUKRIT ADMINISTRATION HAS MADE NO FORMAL POLICY DECISION OR DECLARATION ON ITS INTENDED COUNTER-INSURGENCY POLICY, IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAMS INITIATED IN THE PAST CONTINUES, BUT WITHOUT THE DRIVE AND COORDINATION WHICH STRONG CENTRAL DIRECTION SHOULD PROVIDE. LOCAL COMMANDERS CONTINUE TO TRAIN VILLAGE VOLUNTEERS IN THE NORTH-EAST AND SOUTH. THE FIRST CLASS UNDER THE NEW VOLUNTEER DEFENSE CORPS PROGRAM ENTERED TRAINING APRIL 15. ARMY OPERATIONS INTO CT BASE AREAS TAKE PLACE BUT NOT WITH THE FREQUENCY AND VIGOR NEEDED TO MAKE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS AGAINST THE LONG-ENTRENCHED ENEMY. THE CIVIC-ACTION-ORIENTED VILLAGE SELF DEFENSE AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (AW PAW PAW) IS DEVELOPING AN IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATION IN BANGKOK, BUT FIELD EXECUTION IS NOT PENDING NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL STUDY.

2. THE SINGLE CLEAR ACTION TAKEN BY THE NEW ADMINISTRATION IS THE EXTENSION OF MARTIAL LAW IN THE 28 MOST SENSITIVE PROVINCES. WITHOUT THIS ACTION THE ARMY WOULD BE HANDICAPPED IN ITS ABILITY TO ACT AGAINST THE INSURGENTS, AND AN ACCELERATED DETERIORATION IN SECURITY WOULD PROBABLY HAVE RESULTED.

3. CI POLICY REMAINS AN EXTREMELY SENSITIVE ISSUE AMONG ACTIVIST ELEMENTS, PARTICULARLY STUDENTS, WHOM KHUKRIT DOES NOT WANT TO ALIENATE UNNECESSARILY OR PREMATURELY. IT IS LIKELY, THEREFORE, THAT HE WILL AVOID CONFRONTATIONS IN THE LEGISLATURE ON CI POLICY, AVOID OTHER ACTIONS WHICH COULD PROVOKE THE ACTIVISTS, AND CONTINUE PRESENT POLICIES IN AS INCONSPICUOUS A MANNER AS POSSIBLE. THE RESULT WILL NOT BE THE KIND OF PRIORITY, SUSTAINED AND COORDINATED ATTENTION TO THIS PROBLEM WHICH ITS RESOLUTION REQUIRES. STUDENT INVESTIGATIONS INTO ALLEGED CI-ASSOCIATED "ATROCITIES" IN PHATTALUNG PROVINCE IN THE SOUTH HAS HAD A STRONG IMPACT ON GENERAL KRIT SIWARA AND SENIOR OFFICERS OF THE RTA. KRIT WITH DEFINITE FUTURE POLITICAL AMBITIONS, IS PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO SUCH CHARGES AND HAS THREATENED TO PULL
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PAGE 03 BANGKO 07111 01 OF 03 231458Z

THE RTA OUT OF CI WORK AND TURN THE RESPONSIBILITY OVER TO THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. WIDESPREAD ADVERSE PUBLICITY IN LOCAL MEDIA ON ALLEGED ATROCITIES BY RTG SECURITY FORCES RESULTED IN AT LEAST A SLOWDOWN IN CI SUPPRESSION OPERATIONS.

4. THAI REALIZE THAT CI POLICY CANNOT BE CONSIDERED IN ISOLATION FROM FUNDAMENTAL FOREIGN POLICY, BUT A

COHERENT CONCEPT DEALING WITH BOTH HAS YET TO BE WORKED OUT. ALTHOUGH MANY THAI SHARE THE BELIEFS THAT THEIR COUNTRY WILL BECOME THE NEXT FOCAL POINT FOR COMMUNIST-STYLE PEOPLE'S WAR AND THAT THE U.S. IS OPTING OUT OF ANY MEANINGFUL ROLE (FOR THAILAND) IN THE POWER BALANCE IN ASIA, A CONSENSUS ON WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT IS UNLIKELY WITHIN THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION. THE THAIS CAN BE EXPECTED TO SEEK SOME DEGREE OF ACCOMMODATION WITH COMMUNIST FORCES IN THE REGION AND TO CONTINUE TO MODIFY THEIR FORMER CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH THE U.S. AT THE SAME TIME, THE THAIS WILL ATTEMPTS TO OBTAIN WHAT STRENGTH THEY CAN FROM STRONGER REGIONAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION THROUGH ASEAN. ONE POSSIBLE INDICATION OF COMING INTERNAL DIVISION IN THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION IS THE STATEMENT BY MG THUANTHONG SUWANNATHAT, DEPUTY CHIEF OF STAFF, SUPREME COMMAND, ON JANUARY 5, 1975 THAT CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN (THEN A CANDIDATE FOR THE ASSEMBLY AND NOW FOREIGN MINISTER) "KNOWS NOTHING ABOUT COMMUNISM". END SUMMARY

KHUKRIT'S VIEWS

1. ACCORDING TO MOST THAI MILITARY OBSERVERS, PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT UNDERSTANDS THE THREAT POSED BY THE COMMUNIST INSURGENCY AND SUPPORTS THE GENERAL OUTLINE OF THE ESTABLISHED RTG APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM. THIS IS INDICATED ALSO BY KHUKRIT'S STATEMENT ON APRIL 4, IN RESPONSE TO A REPORTER'S QUESTION, THAT "SHOULD THERE BE ACTS OF TERRORISM, INCIDENTS IN WHICH WEAPONS ARE USED, WE MUST SUPPRESS THEM OF COURSE... AT THE SAME TIME...THE GOVERNMENT MUST ENDEAVOR TO ENSURE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BANGKO 07111 01 OF 03 231458Z

THAT THE PEOPLE ENJOY SECURITY AND CONTENTMENT IN THEIR DAILY LIFE AND FOR THEM TO HAVE WAYS TO EARN A LIVING. THIS IS THE POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT." THIS STATEMENT ALSO DESCRIBES REASONABLY ACCURATELY THE GENERAL CI POLICY OF THE RTG FOR THE LAST TEN YEARS. OUR CONSULATES REPORT, HOWEVER, DISAPPOINTMENT AMONG LOCAL OFFICIALS OVER WHAT THEY FEEL IS A LACK OF FIRM POLICY GUIDANCE ON INSURGENCY MATTERS.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 07111 02 OF 03 230919Z

16

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

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INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 BANGKOK 7111

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

2. MOST SENIOR THAI MILITARY OFFICERS, FROM WHOM KHUKRIT WILL BE TAKING GUIDANCE ON CI POLICIES AND PLANS, BELIEVE THAT THE FALL OF CAMBODIA AND THE POSSIBLE FALL OF SOUTH VIETNAM WILL LEAD TO A MARKED INCREASED IN THE ARMED INSURGENCY. THESE OFFICERS BELIEVE THAT THIS BUILD-UP OF INSURGENT STRENGTH WILL BE BACKED BY THE SOCIALIST POWERS. THEY QUESTION THAILAND'S CAPACITY TO WITHSTAND THIS THREAT WITHOUT SUBSTANTIAL EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE. THEY ARE CONCERNED, ALSO, THAT A CIVILIAN-DOMINATED
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 07111 02 OF 03 230919Z

ADMINISTRATION, UNDER PRESSURE FROM LEFTIST ACTIVISTS,

WILL BE UNWILLING TO DEVOTE WHAT THEY CONSIDER
ADEQUATE BUDGET SUPPORT TO THE MILITARY.

3. GENERAL KRIT SIWARA, RTA COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF
HAS THROWN FURTHER CONFUSION INTO THE CI POLICY FIELD
BY RECENT STATEMENTS WHICH SEEMED TO INDICATE HE
BELIEVES THE ARMY SHOULD TURN OVER ALL INSURGENCY
SUPPRESSION TO THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, (IN EFFECT,
TO THE POLICE). THESE STATEMENTS DISMAYED RTA FIELD
OFFICERS WHO KNOW THAT, EVEN WITH ARMY PARTICIPATION,
THE RTG CI PROGRAM HAS NOT STEMMED THE STEADY GROWTH
OF THE COMMUNIST INSURGENCY. GENERAL KRIT'S OBJECTIVE
IN MAKING SUCH STATEMENTS, ACCORDING TO GENERAL SAIYUT
OF ISOC, IS TO FORCE THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR, PARTICULARLY
THE POLICE, TO TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN CI OPERATIONS.
KRIT IS POLITICALLY SENSITIVE TO STUDENT1-GENERATED
DISCLOSURES OF CI-RELATED ALLEGED "ATROCITIES" IN THE
PROVINCE OF PHATTALUNG IN THE SOUTH AND DESIRES TO
AVOID FURTHER CRITICISM OF RTA CI ACTIVITIES THROUGH
A SHARING OF CI RESPONSIBILITIES WITH POLICE AND CIVILIAN
ELEMENTS OF THE MOI. KRIT HAS A POINT SINCE POLICE AND
CIVILIAN ORGANIZATIONS IN THE MOI HAVE GENERALLY BEEN
SLIGHTING THEIR ASSIGNED CI ROLES LEAVING THE RTA
TO BEAR THE BRUNT OF CI OPERATIONS AND ANY CRITICISMS
ASSOCIATED WITH THE CONDUCT OF CI. KRIT IS AWARE
OF THE NECESSITY TO KEEP THE RTA INVOLVED IN ITS
CURRENT INTERNAL SECURITY MISSION AND WILL UTILIZE

THE RTA IN A CONTINUING PRIMARY CI ROLE WHILE AT
THE SAME TIME APPLYING POLITICAL PRESSURE ON THE
POLICE AND CIVILIANS TO ASSUME THEIR SHARE OF RESPONSIBILITIES.

4. DESPITE TOP-LEVEL CONFUSION AND INDECISION, ESTABLISHED
CI PROGRAMS ARE CARRIED ALONG ON THEIR OWN MOMENTUM.
THE RTA KNOWS IT CANNOT PROVIDE SECURITY TO ALL VILLAGES
IN INSURGENT-AFFECTED AREAS AND IS CARRYING OUT, UNDER
OVER-ALL ISOC COORDINATION, PROGRAMS TO TRAIN VILLAGE
VOLUNTEERS IN THE NORTH-EAST, AND PEOPLE'S RESISTANCE
AGAINST COMMUNISM TEAMS AND PEOPLE'S UNITY GROUPS
(MOSLEM-BASED) IN THE SOUTH. ISOC CONTINUES TO BUILD
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BANGKO 07111 02 OF 03 230919Z

UP AN INTER-MINISTERIAL ORGANIZATION TO IMPLEMENT THE
VILLAGE SELF-DEFENSE AND DEVELOPMENT (AW PAW PAW)
PROGRAM, EMBODIED IN THE VILLAGE SECURITY MANUAL. THE
MANUAL, BEGUN UNDER THE THANOM ADMINISTRATION, WAS
COMPLETED UNDER, AND APPROVED BY, THE SANYA GOVERNMENT.
AFTER A BRIEFING APRIL 7 ON AW PAW PAW BY GENERAL
SAIYUT, THE INTERNAL SECURITY COMMITTEE OF THE
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL (NSC) REFERRED THIS AND

THE MATTER OF ISOC'S FUTURE TO A SUBCOMMITTEE. FOR LACK OF ANY OTHER COHERENT APPROACH TO THE CI PROBLEM, IT IS LIKELY THAT AW PAW PAW - WITH ITS EMPHASIS ON LOCAL INITIATIVE AND DEVELOPMENT - WILL BE ACCEPTED.

MARTIAL LAW

5. SINCE 1965, WHEN THE CT FORMALLY ENTERED THE STAGE OF "ARMED STRUGGLE", THE RTA HAS BEEN ENGAGED WITH THE INSURGENTS UNDER AUTHORIZATION OF MARTIAL LAW. ON MARCH 31, 1975 THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND THE SENATE VOTED TO CONTINUE APPLICATION OF MARTIAL LAW TO THE 28 AFFECTED PROVINCES. A HARBINGER OF DIFFICULTIES AHEAD FOR THE ADMINISTRATION IN CI MATTERS WAS THE FACT THAT A MAJORITY OF THE ASSEMBLY VOTED AGAINST THE EXTENSION; ONLY SOLID SUPPORT IN THE SENATE ENABLED PASSAGE.

ISOC REORGANIZATION

6. ISOC HAS BECOME THE FOCUS OF STUDENT DISSATISFACTION OVER RTG CI POLICY AND OPERATIONS, DESPITE THE FACT THAT ISOC IS A PLANNING AND COORDINATING, NOT COMMAND, AGENCY. THE PENDING DECISION OF THE NSC SUBCOMMITTEE ON ISOC'S FUTURE WILL INFLUENCE STRONGLY THE DIRECTION OF THE RTG CI PROGRAMS. IF ISOC IS MADE MORE POWERFUL, WITH DIRECT ACCESS TO THE PRIME MINISTER, CI PROGRAMS COULD BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE. IF ISOC IS DISSOLVED AND NO OTHER COORDINATING MECHANISM ESTABLISHED, CI WILL BECOME EVEN WEAKER THAN IT IS TODAY. A CONTINUATION OF THE STATUS QUO IN FACT IF NOT IN NAME (WHICH IS MOST LIKELY) WILL NEITHER IMPROVE THE CI PROGRAM NOR SATISFY CRITICS. STUDENT AND PRESS ATTACKS ON ISOC COUPLED WITH RTG DELIBERATIONS
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 04 BANGKO 07111 02 OF 03 230919Z

ON ITS FUTURE HAVE HAD A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE MORALE OF ITS PERSONNEL AND PACE AND SCOPE OF CI ACTIVITIES. WHILE BUSINESS CONTINUES MORE OR LESS AS USUAL A GENERAL ATTITUDE OF UNCERTAINTY PERMEATES THE ORGANIZATION RESULTING IN EVEN LESS CI ACTIVITY THAN USUAL.

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 07111 03 OF 03 231002Z

11

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 BANGKOK 7111

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

THE STUDENT POSITION

7. STUDENT ACTIVIST GROUPS BELIEVE THAT RTG SUPPRESSION ACTIONS SOMETIMES INJURE THE INNOCENT, ARE UNNECESSARILY HARSH, AND OFTEN EXACERBATE THE PROBLEM OF INSURGENCY. IN THIS, THEY REFLECT A NOT UNCOMMON ATTITUDE AMONG THAI THAT INSURGENT RANKS ARE PREDOMINATLY COMPOSED OF MISGUIDED PEOPLE TEMPORARILY ESTRANGED FROM SOCIETY, "LOST SOULS" WHO SHOULD BE RETURNED TO SOCIETY BY
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BANGKO 07111 03 OF 03 231002Z

EMPHASIS ON POLITICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL METHODS, RATHER THAN FORCE. THESE VIEWS ARE WIDESPREAD ENOUGH TO INFLUENCE RTG CI POLICY CONSIDERATIONS AND PERHAPS FUTURE BUDGET DECISIONS.

ABOLITION OF THE ANTI-COMMUNIST LAW

8. UNDER THE THANOM - PRAPHAT ADMINISTRATION, RECOMMENDATION HAD ALREADY BEEN MADE TO ABOLISH THE ANTI-COMMUNIST LAW AND TO REPLACE IT WITH A LAW WHICH, WITHOUT MENTIONING COMMUNISTS PER SE, WOULD PERMIT ARMED SUPPRESSION OF DISSIDENTS. ISOC HAD PREPARED A DRAFT LAW ALONG THESE LINES PRIOR TO THE 1973 OVERTHROW OF THANOM AND PRAPHAT. SINCE THEN PRESSURES FROM THE STUDENTS AND THE LEFT HAVE BEEN BUILDING TO ABOLISH THE ANTI-COMMUNIST LAW. IN EARLY APRIL THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONSIDERING THE IDEA THAT THE OLD LAW BE REPLACED BY ONE WHICH - IN EFFECT - WOULD ALLOW THE GOVERNMENT TO TAKE THE SAME SECURITY MEASURES IT DOES NOW. ON APRIL 15, THE BANGKOK POST QUOTED GENERAL KRIT SIWARA AS SAYING THAT "WE ARE THREATENED BY COMMUNISTS ABROAD AND WE ARE FACING INSURGENCY BY INTERNAL COMMUNISTS WHO USE MODERN FIREARMS TO FIGHT THE GOVERNMENT. IF THE ANTI-COMMUNIST ACT IS LIFTED AND NO OTHER LAW TAKES ITS PLACE, THE SOLDIERS WILL HAVE NO LEGAL BASIS FOR SUPPRESSING THE COMMUNIST GURERRILLAS".

DIRECTION OF THE FUTURE DEBATE - DOMINOES IN ACTION

9. UNDERLYING SOME OF THE PROPOSALS FOR ACCEDELERATION OF THE TREND TOWARD DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION OF NEIGHBORING SOCIALIST REGIMES IS THE ASSUMPTION THAT SUCH MOVES COULD RESULT IN A REDUCTION IN EXTERNAL SUPPORT FOR THE INSURGENCY. SHOULD THE COLLAPSE OF THE KHMER REPUBLIC BE FOLLOWED BY THAT OF THE GVN, OR IF LAOS SHOULD GO, BY EITHER POLITICAL OR MILITARY MEANS, IT IS LIKELY THAT THE RTG WILL ACCELERATE THE PRESENT TREND AWAY FROM ITS FORMER CLOSE ASSOCIATION WITH THE U.S. THE THAI WILL SEEK TO COME TO TERMS WITH WHAT THEY SEE AS THE DOMINANT FORCES IN ASIA. GIVEN WHAT MANY THAI FEEL TO BE THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE ROLE OF THE U.S. IN THE ASIAN POWER BALANCE, THE THAIS CAN BE EXPECTED TO AVOID THE EXPOSED POSITION WHICH AN OVERT ANTI-CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BANGKO 07111 03 OF 03 231002Z

COMMUNIST POLICY WOULD ENTAIL. WHILE SOME GESTURES TOWARD CLOSER RELATIONS WITH BURMA AND MALAYSIA ARE LIKELY, THE THAIS KNOW THAT NEITHER CAN OFFER THAILAND AN ANCHOR TO WINDWARD. IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT THE THAI FOREIGN MINISTRY'S INTEREST IN THE ASEAN ORGANIZATION WILL CONTINUE AT A HIGH LEVEL BOTH FOR ITS POLITICAL POTENTIAL AND ITS BASIC ECONOMIC CHARACTER. THE THAIS MAY FEEL THAT A VIABLE ASEAN COULD ULTIMATELY OFFER A MECHANISM FOR BI-LATERAL OR COLLECTIVE SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS IN THE REGION. HOWEVER, THE BUFFER GEOGRAPHIC POSITION WHICH THAILAND NOW HOLDS IN

RESPECT TO ITS ASEAN PARTNERS AND THE POLITICAL RISKS WHICH THIS POSITION INVOLVES WOULD DISCOURAGE ASEAN INTEREST IN THE KING OF POLITICAL ALLIANCES AND GUARANTEES WHICH THE RTG IS LIKELY TO SEEK. THUS, THE DETERMINANTS OF FUTURE RTG CI POLICY ARE ONLY NOW EMERGING AND, IN THE END, CI POLICY WILL BE A FUNCTION OF DECISION YET TO BE MADE ON THAILAND'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE EMERGING POWER EQUATION ON THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN MAINLAND. IN THIS CONTEXT, EVEN THE LEGALIZATION OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF THAILAND BECOMES A REAL POSSIBILITY. MASTERS

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